

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE

STATE CAPITOL
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA
95814



December 15, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
322 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader McConnell, Leader McCarthy, and Leader Schumer:

We are writing to ask for your support for the following three key nutrition items currently under consideration in the next round of federal COVID relief: increase of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits; ensure Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) reaches all eligible children in child care settings; and increase The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) support for food banks. Failure to take these actions could worsen hunger, which is increasing at alarming rates, and have devastating consequences for children who are not receiving sufficient nutrition due to resources limitations in child care settings.

An increase in the monthly SNAP payment will provide much needed relief to low-income households that are struggling to meet their nutritional needs while facing reduced work hours and/or layoffs coupled with increased household expenses for things like remote schooling, personal protective equipment, and higher cost of groceries. In addition to providing households with more resources to purchase food, SNAP benefits also spark the economy. As shown in a Department of Agriculture study, every dollar in new SNAP benefits increases Gross Domestic Product by about \$1.50 during a weak economy.

P-EBT was authorized under Families First Coronavirus Act of 2020 in order to provide food to children who are eligible for free or reduced priced school meals but unable to access those meals due to school closures during COVID-19. P-EBT has fed over 3.7 million of California's needy school age children during the COVID crisis and we thank you for your leadership to establish and extend the program. The most recent COVID relief bill, H.R. 8337, expanded access to this essential benefit to include young children in child care settings under certain conditions, including that the children must reside within a household that receives SNAP benefits and they must be enrolled in a child care facility.

Similar to simplifying assumptions for school-aged children, states must be able to provide blanket P-EBT eligibility for all children less than 6 years old who have resided within a SNAP household and experienced a COVID-related impact prescribed by H.R. 8337. This is because there are tens of thousands of child care sites operating across California and there is no centralized data or reporting infrastructure. Thus, matching child care enrollment with SNAP enrollment is not feasible – especially when providers and administrators are straining to meet the needs of their client families. In addition, any option that requires verification will result in far fewer eligible families accessing P-EBT.

Simplifying access to P-EBT will avoid anticipated prohibitive challenges with eligibility verification that otherwise would likely be required. This recommendation reflects the collective input from a coalition of California child care providers, anti-hunger and children’s advocacy groups, unions, and others with direct experience, as noted in their December 9, 2020 letter to the Delegation.

With the termination of trade mitigation and the TEFAP Farmers to Families food boxes looming, California’s food banks are facing a 50 percent reduction in federal funding in the coming year. These declining resources are occurring while food banks report that demand emergency food assistance in California has increased by as much as 100 percent. Some food banks report that 40 percent of their clients are requesting food assistance for the first time ever. Increasing resources for our food banks via TEFAP will help this important part of the nutrition assistance network that is currently feeding 5 million needy Californians.

Thank you for considering this urgent request.

Sincerely,



Melissa Hurtado
Senator, 14th District



Susan Eggman
Senator, 5th District



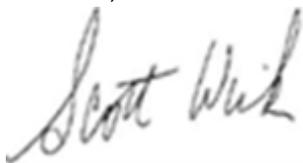
Nancy Skinner
Senator, 9th District



Scott Wiener
Senator, 11th District



Dave Cortese
Senator, 15th District



Scott Wilk
Senator 21st District



Brian Jones
Senator, 38th District